[Theme music ‘Some Spooky Sh*t Is Going On Here’ by Theo Goodwin plays.]

INTRO

The Underwood Collection is a derivative, non-canonical, fan-made project derived from The Magnus Archives, an original horror podcast which is created and distributed by Rusty Quill Ltd. The Underwood Collection is not endorsed by Rusty Quill Ltd and is distributed under a Creative Commons, attribution, non-commercial sharealike 4.0 international license. For more information about the original source material visit www.RustyQuill.com/TheMagnusArchives.

The Underwood Collection, Episode Four: Interstellar

(Tape recorder clicks on. Tape static is heard continually throughout)

ULYSSES

Statement of... unknown-
Christ, avatars really don’t like having names, do they?
-Regarding their relationship to the void. Statement given 15th of March, 2009. Recording by UC Bamba, assis- *sorry*.

Recording by UC Bamba, Head Curator of the Usher Foundation, Washington, DC.

Statement begins.

You asked, Archivist, for my story, not my name. I can offer you a story. I think it was mine, once.

When I was growing up, I was always hungry. You've got hollow bones, my mother would say. The details are gone, but I remember that with clarity.

The way she'd laugh as she said it, the way I'd wriggle in my seat at the thought. I didn't like it, as a child, but now, in a way, I think she was right.

My bones are hollow, but they have never been empty. I contain a deep, aching galaxy of darkness. I wake up after dreams of falling, unsure if what
I am feeling is terror or desperate, desperate love.

You must understand, I don't know why I am here. Even as I look at the paper in front of me, at the pen I hold between my fingers, I am distant. On my way in, your receptionist greeted me. Her voice echoed, reverberating off eternity with a sound that would entrance you, if you could only hear it.

It entrances me still.

Why am I here? Not to be rescued. I am not afraid of feeling small, and oh, we are all so small, with our jobs and families and little worries. Our planet is small, but it's still too big for us, isn't it, too big for our limited imaginations. You can't even imagine your whole country, can you, Archivist? I bet that gnaws at you. So much you can never know.

I was a child when I first felt it. I must have been seven years old, my dreams already filled with emptiness, walking home after a New Year's Eve party. Inside it had been warm and bright, full of food and laughter, and I'd eaten enough to satisfy even me. Outside was quiet. Frost squeaked under my feet and the cold stung at my face as I trailed after

my mother. Neither of us said a word. We were standing on the path outside our house when she stopped, and said to me, “Look at how clear the stars are!”

Her voice was bright and cheerful, and it grated against my ears after so long in the silence of the night.

But I always was an obedient child. I looked up. The sky was vast, the largest thing I had ever seen. As I stared into it, I could no longer tell if I was looking up, or if the world had flipped and I was staring downwards, down into a yawning chasm that longed to drag me into it. I recognised the sensation from my nightmares, and that scared me more than anything, my worst fears coming true on that wintery New Year’s Eve. I think I whimpered as I grabbed blindly for my mother’s hand, too afraid to take my eyes off the stars bearing down on me. She laughed, told me don’t be silly, but she didn’t understand. The void was waiting for me, I knew it, even back then.

But they never understand, do they? Not really. The distance between me and my mother only increased as I grew up. Perhaps it was my fault. The details are hazy in my mind.

I’m cold. Frost crackles at the corners of my eyelids as I blink, my fingers ache with it. This chill comes from within me, slowing my blood, leaving me pale and still. Hollow bones. Each heartbeat is like a skyfall.

I don’t sleep much, nowadays. When I do, months pass me by as I dream lifetimes of smooth, perfect stillness.

The Twisting Deceit is not entirely incorrect. Spirals truly are things of beauty, curling lines that wind outwards, each swooping arm a graceful new Elysium. But the void is not about tight, winding corridors, not like

Distortion. There is nowhere to run to, no ground to which you might cling, no stars by which to orientate yourself. After all, there has never been any such thing as the sky. People will tell you otherwise, but they too are deceiving themselves. We are floating in the void, Archivist, the void that created us and will one day reclaim us. There is no way out, no door through which to escape. This is it.

Does that scare you? This universe is so far beyond your control. I can feel the fear that lives within you, that fills your veins and poisons your heart. I can almost taste it, as I sit in this chair and watch the ice crystallise over this paper you gave to me. You hide it well, with all your seeing and learning and archiving, but it will not save you. We are made of stardust, and will be stardust again.

You were so polite when I arrived in your institute, so calmly and gently condescending. I wonder how much you could see in my frost lined eyes, in my shaking fingers. You watched me with a distance of your own, the quiet separation of the observer.

I don't think you would survive it, living in my body. Not you, nor any of your kind. You would throw yourself into this void seeking answers, and they would drag you on and on, a thread unspooling forever before you. There are no answers, out here. There are no questions. There is nothing, and everything, eternity wrapped in eternity-- it would drive you mad. It would drive anyone mad. It has already driven countless people so.

I do not know why I am here. I thank you for your time, Archivist, though I don't think I will see you again. My bones are hollow. They ache.

Statement ends.

So…

That's *exactly* what you want to read after your superior goes missing on the bloody ocean. Thanks, Adriene. What are you trying to tell me, exactly?

Sorry- I'm sorry. I'm- a bit on edge. I mean- I've met Leitner, I know what the powers are, I know- What's happened is different, I just- This statement just hits a bit close to home.

And yes, I know it was an accident, and yes, I know he's just missing, not dead, but it's- weird, and bad, and apparently the spooky in this place is going to my head, because I'm- paranoid about it, and-

Frank is a good man. Good at his job, too. Left us in the dark about some things, but- who wouldn't? He had a lot on his plate. My responsibilities now, I suppose, til he comes back- If, he comes back.

And on top of that, this was a Magnus Institute statement, one of the good ones. No follow up provided though.

I have… no idea why it's here, but I went through the trouble of recording it, so Morgan, it's going in our archives. Let's see if we can give it back though, just seems like the right thing to do.

I don't know.

Getting the news about Frank was weird, and I thought maybe a statement would calm me down, but… Guess not.

I should go home. Sleep. Yeah. Sorry, tape recorders are too tempting not to just… talk into. Looks like I am spilling my guts again. Sorry Adriene, sorry Mog. Sorry anyone who's using this for research in the

future, it is eleven fifty-four pm and I will not be reading this again. My stunning insights into current events should be enough.

End recording.

[Theme plays.]

OUTRO

The Underwood Collection is a podcast produced and distributed by the Pitch Library Creative Team. Find us on Twitter @PitchLibrary, on Tumblr at www.pitchlibrary.tumblr.com, or contact us by sending an email to usherfoundation@gmail.com. The Underwood Theme was written by Theodore Goodwin and the Underwood Logo was created by Mae B. Thank you for listening.

[Theme ends.]